

U.S. ARMY CHAPLAIN SCHOOL

1
THE CHAPLAIN DURING RECONSTRUCTION AND
THE INDIAN WARS, 1865-1877 AND 1865-1891

A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE C-22 CLASS
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FOREWARD

There are two ways to approach a paper such as this. One is to write two papers, one on the chaplain during Reconstruction and another on the chaplain during the Indian Wars. The other is to incorporate both into one subject and approach it as an era. I chose the latter because of length limitations, and the overlap of the two areas.

Obviously, with such a broad subject, and with a two thousand word limitation, an in-depth view of the chaplaincy of that era cannot possibly be accomplished. In the space allotted, I give an overview of the chaplaincy of that era.

However, this is not sufficient to adequately cover the subject. With faculty approval, I am including several annexes which I feel are vital to the context of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

The Corps of Chaplains had been abolished after the War of 1812 but was reconstituted in 1838.¹ During the Civil War, many chaplains ministered on both sides. At the close of the war, "Most chaplains sought the 'freedom' to return to civilian life." ²

During Reconstruction, the Army was divided into military districts and only thirty post chaplains were authorized. This meant one chaplain for approximately ten posts.³ The only units authorized chaplains were four colored regiments.

The chaplaincy during this era was certainly not an ideal place for a minister to work. And yet, for whatever motivation, many sought appointment to the few chaplain slots available. One must assume this motivation was out of dedication to the Almighty, for their service faced odds which only combat, in today's Army, could compare.

¹John Williams Tebbel, Compact History of the Indian Wars (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1966), p. 167.

²Philo E. Howard, The Life Story of Henry Clay Trumbull; Missionary, Army Chaplain, Editor, Author (Philadelphia: The Sunday School Times Co., 1905), p. 231.

³U.S., Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Chaplains of the United States Army, by Roy J. Honeywell (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1958), p. 152.

CHAPTER I

WHAT WAS THE CHAPLAINCY?

An Act of Congress of 2 March 1867 directed that all chaplains be commissioned by the President with the same tenure, retirement, allowances and pensions as other officers. The chaplain had grade of "Chaplain...rank of Captain of Infantry." ⁴ Chaplains were not eligible, however, for promotion; not even brevet promotion.

Their annual pay in 1870 was \$1500.00 with a ten per cent increase for each five years of service.⁵

During the war, the chaplain's uniform was plain black. In 1880, the shephard's crook of frosted silver on a shoulder strap of black velvet was authorized. In 1884, the chaplain was prescribed to wear the uniform called "undress chapeau of staff officers!" ⁶

The view others had of chaplains often was jaundiced. In fact, chaplains of that era were often treated in jocose and frequently ribald terms." ⁷ The Weekly Arizona Miner of

⁴Ibid., p. 152.

⁵Ibid., pp. 152-3.

⁶Ibid., p. 157.

⁷R. Ernst Dupuy, The Compact History of the U.S. Army (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), p. 138.

December 1878 wrote that "Chaplains did little good, little harm, had little care except themselves and payday." ⁸ This is the same paper which only ten years prior had spoken high praise for chaplains. Others saw the chaplain's position only as having to keep out of mischief, sign his vouchers and seek an early retirement.⁹ Fortunately, this was not the universal attitude.

There apparently was a long list of applicants at all times who wanted to become chaplains. An illustration of this, as well as how chaplains were viewed, is seen in a letter General Sherman, then commander-in-chief, wrote to one whose brother apparently was considering applying for appointment as chaplain:

...I think there are several hundred applicants now, each one of whom is stronger in the faith than St. Paul, and most of whom, before appointment, are anxious to be martyrs; but once appointed and confirmed they object to our frontier posts because they are ill adapted for raising a large family of small children.

Of course the whole system is now a farce and meant to be so. If Congress had wanted the Army to have the influence of Religion, it would allow the commander of each post remote from civilization to hire and pay for a minister while employed, like surgeons. Of such posts there are nearly a hundred, whereas the Chaplains are limited to thirty - say half of whom are sick, or don't like the isolation of Texas, Arizona, etc. Of course there are no vacancies now, and they are gobbled up as soon as the telegraph announces a death - there are no resignations - and so greedy are the applicants that they will not even wait for the funeral.

If your brother wants to join in this scramble to become a martyr, let him send me his papers, and I will see

⁸Richard K. Smith, "For God...For Country...For Territory," Arizona Highways, April 1973, p. 10.

⁹T.G. Steward, Active Service or Gospel Work Among U.S. Soldiers, (New York: The U.S. Army Aid Association, 1893), p. 14.

they are filed; and then let him have some senator or member of Congress rush to the President the moment he learns a Chaplain is "in extremis". -W.T. Sherman, Gen.¹⁰

Apparently, political influence was helpful, if not mandatory. A further example of this was when at one point one hundred candidates for appointment were considered and only one was selected. The selectee later said, "General John A. Logan's strong influence and Secretary (of War) Stanton's remembrance...quickly decided the contest in my favor." ¹¹

Once on active duty, the chaplain worked for the Adjutant General, with immediate responsibility to the Post Commander. There was no Chief of Chaplains. General Orders #158, dated 20 October 1864 required each chaplain to submit a report which was to contain the following:

1. Duty station.
2. Date appointed and date commissioned.
3. Number of men on post and in the hospital.
4. Library report.
5. Religion services and attendance.
6. Deaths/Burials.
7. Moral condition of troops.
8. General history of post.
9. Whether or not the chaplain serves as superintendant of the post school.
10. Suggestions.

The bureaucracy the chaplain faced was phenomenal. In 1869, Chaplain George Pepper was left in limbo once between assignments for almost a year.¹² He resigned under pressure

¹⁰Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹George W. Pepper, Under 3 Flags, (n.p.: Curt and Jennings, 1899), p. 116.

¹²Chaplain George Pepper Record, Records of the Appointment, Commission and Personnel Branch, The Adjutant General's Office, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

and spent the rest of his life attempting to regain his commission. Chaplain Charles Blake was reassigned from Fort Whipple to Camp McDowell. Enroute he became insane and spent four years incapacitated. When he recovered, he realized he was discharged from the Army.¹³ He eventually regained his commission but the red tape he encountered doing so was unbelievable.

¹³Personal Papers of Chaplain Charles Morris Blake, Richard K. Smith Collection, Prescott, Arizona.

CHAPTER II

WHAT DID THE CHAPLAINS CONSIDER MINISTRY?

The chaplains' orders were to "hold religious services at least once on every Sabbath when practical, and shall bury the dead with religious services." ¹⁴ In addition, most chaplains visited the sick, distributed literature and visited the prisoners.

Chaplain Mark Chevers sought a ministry to Jefferson Davis during the two years of his confinement to Fort Monroe. However, he was ordered to stop visiting him by the Secretary of War.¹⁵

Chaplain Alex Gilmore, in 1778, related an example of two prisoners, sentenced to death, who were "brought to the joys of faith" as a result of his personal witness to them.¹⁶ Chaplain Gilmore also became known for his "protracted meetings," many of which became seeds for churches.¹⁷ Often a chaplain

¹⁴"Army Chaplains: Their Hindrances and Encouragements," U.S. Military Post Library Association, [1870], p. 3.

¹⁵Chaplain Mark L. Chevers Record, Records of the Appointment, Commission and Personnel Branch, The Adjutant General's Office, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶Smith, "For God...For Country...For Territory," p.9.

¹⁷U.S., Department of the Army, Chaplains of the U.S. Army, p. 156.

would supply local churches until a pastor could be obtained.

Many chaplains felt very strongly about vices such as drinking, gambling, desecrating the sabbath, etc. In fact, several are known to have gotten into trouble due to their stand against such things. In April, 1872, Chaplain David White demanded that the post store be closed on Sunday and that gambling and drunkenness should cease. He was transferred, but not to Alaska, which is where his commander had suggested.¹⁸

Some of the non-secular responsibilities the chaplains had almost always included post librarian, treasurer,¹⁹ and in one case at Fort Laramie, as post gardener.²⁰

George Pepper, who served in North Carolina, had many widespread responsibilities, many self-imposed, such as being an official in the Freedman's Bureau, giving lectures, writing books, being editor of the Raleigh Standard, all while on active duty as a chaplain.²¹ Another chaplain became a representative in the Twentieth Arizona Territory Legislature while still another was elected as chaplain to both houses of the territory.²² Chaplain Winfield Scott even had two towns named

¹⁸Smith, "For God...For Country...For the Territory," p.9.

¹⁹U.S., Department of the Army, The American Army Chaplaincy - A Brief History (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955), p. 6.

²⁰Leroy R. Hafen and Francis Marion Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890 (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1938), p. 404.

²¹Record of Chaplain Pepper, National Archives.

²²Smith, "For God...For Country...For the Territory," p.8.

after him: Winfield, Kansas and Scottsdale, Arizona.²³

The law provided that the chaplain should also "perform the duties of schoolmaster." ²⁴ In fact, in 1877 the Secretary of War convened a board to consider the establishment of permanent schools on military posts. This board recommended that Chaplain George Gatewood Mullens have general charge of education in the Army. He accepted and held this position for several years making annual reports to the Secretary of War.²⁵

Some of the chaplains of the West sought a ministry to Indians.²⁶ At Fort Laramie, a Chaplain Wright conducted a funeral for the daughter of one of the Indian chiefs.²⁷ This act helped to confirm a temporary peace. A Catholic priest, Chaplain Edward Vattmann, wrote in his monthly report of 30 November 1891 from Fort Meade, South Dakota, "Soldiers and Indians, who on last Thanksgiving day stood fierce foes, face to face on the field, knelt this year, fast friends, side by side in the post chapel at the alter of the Prince of Peace." ²⁸

²³Ibid., p. 12.

²⁴U.S., Department of the Army, The American Army Chaplaincy, p. 6.

²⁵U.S., Department of the Army, Chaplains in the U.S. Army, p. 157.

²⁶Ibid., p. 154.

²⁷Hafen and Young, Fort Laramie and the Pageant of the West, 1834-1890, pp. 343-4.

²⁸Chaplain Edward Joseph Vattmann Record, Records of the Appointment, Commission and Personnel Branch, The Adjutant General's Office, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

All chaplains did not have this attitude nor this sense of ministry toward Indians. Chaplain White wrote in his diary on 1 January 1861, "Indians came (for making peace) in fine stile for savages in the most grotesque costumes imagineable..."²⁹ Chaplain Blake once said, "As to the Indians, the question is one of pure self-defense. Either you must unite in putting them down, or you must vacate this territory. The Almighty never designed the earth for a few hordes of wandering murdering savages..."³⁰

The chaplain's ministry, in summary, largely depended on the man himself.

²⁹Chaplain David White, Personal Diary, Property of Mrs. Annie Nunn and Mrs. May McGuire, daughters of Chaplain White, Chino Valley, Arizona.

³⁰Personal Papers of Chaplain Blake.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS AND STATUS

To say that the chaplain in those days had problems is a tremendous understatement. There was no supervision, no technical channels, no chaplain hierarchy and no effective endorsing agency. A case in point is when Chaplain White reported as ordered to Fort Riley as Post Chaplain to find a chaplain had already been assigned for sixteen months. It took him forty-five days to get his orders changed. In the meantime, the commander apparently didn't even give him the courtesy of a place to stay.³¹

One anonymous chaplain described his plight as "backed by no organization and left to the best he can alone. He is under immediate military authority and in some cases, woe betide him if the least technicality be not rigidly observed." ³²

Another said he had no support for a place to conduct religious services, with the only choices being an old storehouse without seats, the soldiers' kitchen, a stable or the open air. He said that the choice was simple; either sink into

³¹Personal Papers of David White, Richard K. Smith Collection, Prescott, Arizona.

³²"Army Work on the Frontier," U.S. Post Library Association, [1870], p. 5.

anathy or run the personal hazard of asking for help. To illustrate, his commander threatened him with court martial for writing a private letter to the Chief Quartermaster of Texas asking for some chapel tents.³³

Another chaplain complained of no religious books, no place for worship, no support, small attendance of officers and soldiers at religious services, Sunday inspections and low pay. He argued that chaplains should be paid the same as surgeons, since the spiritual is at least as important as the physical.³⁴

The chaplain, like other married soldiers, often was assigned to posts too dangerous for families, or too far from civilization for children to have more than a perfunctory education. It was not uncommon for a chaplain to be separated from his family for several years at a time.

As suggested by General Sherman's letter, the chaplain often had no compunction about requesting a transfer, often through an influential friend. If the transfer was not granted, he often would request, and often was granted, several months leave.

Apparently, the chaplain was often not on good terms with other officers, many of whom resented chaplains for their rank. Officers often served fifteen years or more before

³³Ibid.

³⁴"Army Chaplains: Their Hindrances and Encouragements," U.S. Military Post Library Association, pp. 1-2.

being promoted to captain. Also, officers and soldiers alike often were antagonistic toward chaplains because of their resistance to vices which were tolerated at many of the more remote posts.³⁵

A map of Fort Sill in 1874 shows the chaplain's quarters completely isolated from soldiers' and officers' quarters.³⁶ It makes one wonder if this was by design.

There was some support for the chaplain's work. A civilian editor called for at least seventy more chaplains than the thirty post and four regimental chaplains authorized. He said,

Any one of the more important military posts would afford constant work for an efficient chaplain. The present chaplains of the Army are not efficient, but they are too much in the minority. No one not actually in the field can realize the discouragements which surround and embarrass them.³⁷

A chaplain's status was often very tentative. His problems obviously caused discouragements without sequel.

³⁵U.S., Department of the Army, Chaplains of the U.S. Army, p. 153.

³⁶W.S. Nye, Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), p. 359.

³⁷"Post Chaplains," U.S. Military Post Library Association, [1870], pp. 7-8.

CONCLUSION

Faults can be seen in the character of many of the chaplains of that day as well as in the system which appointed them. The chaplaincy had its share of hardships, stupidity, deficiencies and even luck. In view of all this, though, only one term can adequately express what these chaplains were: "Profiles in Courage."

APPENDIX "A"

DAVID WHITE DIARY EXCERPTS

Following are some highlights from a personal diary of Chaplain David White. Only a few selected items of interest have been lifted from the diary to give an idea of his routine in three different years. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are as written.

1866

- 2 April - Left home for Fort Riley.
- 9 April - Arrived Ft. Riley. Arrived at the fort about 9 o'clock at night. My appearance was like a strange comment. A man already occupying the place. What will be the result I do not know.
- 10 April - Met Mr. Reynolds who seems to be filling the place of Chaplain...Will likely have to wait a week or two before I shall know what will become of me.
- 11 April - Reported to the commanding officer formally for duty and asked for quarters but was not recognized. Wrote to Judge Davis on the matter.
- 15 April - Went to Church to hear the Rev. Reynolds preach but no one attended. no service, not even a prayer. The Sabbath passed away wearily. Not very well.
- 22 April - Sabbath attended Church at Salina heard Bro. Chilton. Preached myself at Bro. Hamilton's on Saline River).
- 24 April - Still in suspense no word from Washington.
- 28 April - went with Father Sargeant to the Church. Heard Mr. Reynolds preach which nearly consisted of a form and a dull discourse.

Received a letter from home and one from Judge Davis still in doubt as to what will be my destiny.

2 May - Rose and devoted myself anew to God...

1867

4 Nov. - Left...again for the Army of the Plains.

19 Nov. - Resumed the march and arrived at the Cold Ranch kept by Mr. Reynolds, a Frenchman who has married a squaw. O the filth of conversation drunkenness gambling and profanity!! may I never see or hear the like again.

21 Nov. - Remained at the tavern. wickedness a supreme how can human nature be so low.

22 Nov. - Still in the sodom of the plains.

24 Nov. - ...O the immortality of the Western posts and Army Officers.

6 Dec. - Today at Reno a very drunken hole.

10 Dec. - Rose left camp and arrived at Fort Phil Kearny. Reported for duty.

11 Dec. - Asked for quarters but have (unclear), was kindly received by Lieut. Conley into his house

12 Dec. - Work was commenced on a new set of quarters for me but there is a plenty already.

13 Dec. - Rose and resumed reading my Greek Testament today commenced boarding with the Widow Wheatley on the 12th.

15 Dec. - ...Preached at the flag staff at 2 oclock P.M.... Had a good a good (sic) congregation for the army.

19 Dec. - very stormy and (blank) with snow. Commenced holding prayer meeting organized bible clas of four.

20 Dec. - Took dinner with Gen. Smith.

22 Dec. - ...Preached in the afternoon at the practis cabin of the musetians, had about a dozen soldiers.

24 Dec. - ...Held Bible class with five soldiers on this Christmas eve had a good time.

25 Dec. - ...Preached to the prisoners who gave good attentiom.

1868

- 1 Jan. - Beginning another year. O for divine strength to do my duty as a Christian minister...
- 5 Jan. - ...Held prayer meeting with patients in hospital for six men some showed quite a concern for the future.
- 10 Jan. - Cold Read Greek
- 11 Jan. - Red Greek as usual
- 12 Jan. - ...Held prayer in the hospital. Preached at the theatre at two. Held prayer meeting with the Bible class at at (sic) night. Was a meeting of some interest.
- 13 Jan. - Rose renewed my resolutions to serve God a day of severe trial. I am required to make a full requisition for fuel cord in amount which I do not need there is no doubt but it is intended to steal from governmen over my certificate. But by the grace of God I will do my duty and trust him for the future.
- 14 Jan. - Well I have made the requisitions I have the combined powers to fight but by the grace of God I will try to do my duty.
- 15 Jan. - No word as yet. The powers that be are very mad.
- 18 Jan. - Stil mild...Fell quite unwell.
- 19 Jan. - Sunday fair...to unwell to preach. The Bible class now number 23.
- 20 Jan. - Monday fair...Felt much better but very homesick.
- 25 Jan. - ...pleasant meeting of the Bible class. Two more gave their names it now numbers 25. O God/help!
- 30 Jan. - A good turn out of the class. We debate the subject of the Trinity and Sonship at 6.
- 2 Feb. - Sabbath Held prayer in the hospital. Preached at two in hovel to about a dozen soldiers. Bible class at night
- 4 Feb. - Taken before day with Dysentery tried to begin school but was too poorly better in evening.
- 8 Feb. - ...Quite unwell with something like rheumatism.
- 10 Feb. - ...taught school as usual.
- 2 Dec. - Left home for Fort Sedgewic Colorado territory taking adieu from wife and children after commending them to the care of the Lord.

APPENDIX "B"

FROM THE GEORGE PEPPER RECORD

Some highlights from the Military Record of Chaplain George W. Pepper follow to show the variety of activities which he undertook.

- Was chaplain with Gen. Sherman during the Civil War.
- Author of Sherman's Campaigns.
- Lectured in U.S. and Canada on:
 - "Sherman's March to the Sea"
 - "England and the English"
 - "Old Rome and New Italy"
 - "Labor's Problem: Communism or Monopoly?"
 - "Orators and Oratory"
 - "Proude's Ireland from a Protestant Standpoint"
 - "The Humors of the Pulpit and Pew"
- Was recommended in 1868 for Brevet Promotion. Caused a hassle among the powers in Washington due to the fact that it was illegal for chaplains to be promoted.
- Letters in his file:
 - M.G. John Logan to Secretary of War, September 1865.
 - Bre. M.G. Nelson A. Miles to Sec. of War, 20 May 1869.
 - N.C. Gov. W.W. Holden to Pepper, March 1869.
 - Bre. M.G. Nelson A. Miles to Bishop Jones, August 1869.
 - Sen. John Poole to President Grant, May 1869.
 - Many other lengthy letters between Sec. of War, Gen. Sherman and others.
- Was an official of Freedman's Bureau in N.C.
- Was Editor of Raleigh Standard.
- Resigned his commission due to misunderstanding of a reassignment.
- Spent the next twenty years attempting to regain his commission.
- Never was successful even with letters of governors, generals and senators to Sec. of War and to the U.S. President on his behalf.

APPENDIX "C"

OF CHARLES BLAKE'S CAREER

Some highlights from the career of Chaplain Charles Morris Blake show a few of the many difficulties which he encountered as an Army chaplain.

- Wounded during Civil War near Charleston, S.C.
- Was tried via General Court Martial in Annapolis, Md on 18 October 1865. He was a hospital chaplain at the time.
- Charge I: "Conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman." Specification: writing defamatory letter blaming quartermaster and surgeon for the poor condition of the hospital. (Specification paraphrased).
- Charge II: "Conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline." Specification I: tried to get pay for his wife (paraphrased). Specification II: Solicited servant (paraphrased). Specification III: Attempt to interfere with duties of others (paraphrased).
- Blake pleaded not guilty.
- Court found him guilty of all charges. Sentence was dismissal from the service.
- Adjutant General approved Charge I and specification. Disapproved Charge II and all specifications. Sentence was remitted and he was honorably discharged.
- Was restored to active duty.
- Reported to Ft. Whipple, Arizona Territory on 27 October 1866.
- Was elected Chaplain to both houses of the Arizona Territory Legislature.
- Was frequent and popular speaker.
- August 1867, ordered to report to Camp McDowell, Arizona Territory.
- Soon after arrival, had complete mental breakdown. He was completely helpless, deprived of reason, and prostrated for much of the time.
- December 1868, had imaginary evils on post. Wrote to Sec. of War and said that if they were not corrected, he would resign.

- Secretary of War, unaware of his insanity, construed Blake's letter as a resignation and he accepted it.
- Was sent to California to recover.
- Recovered in 1874.
- Studied medicine and was granted the M.D.
- Assisted a son and daughter, who were both doctors, in a thriving practice.
- Applied for a commission again.
- President Hayes examined the evidence, regarded the resignation as void and on 14 May 1878 restored him to the service.
- Blake appealed to court of claims for back pay from 28 April 1869 to 14 May 1878.
- Negative findings due to the statute of limitations.
- Blake appealed to the Supreme Court who upheld the court of claims.
- Although somewhat unclear, Blake apparently served without pay until 20 May 1881 when President Garfield reappointed him.
- Blake was placed on the retired list on 12 May 1883.
- 1884, Congress passed a bill restoring his pay from 1878-1881.

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